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# *Terrorism and Civilisation: the Case for a Relational Approach*



## *Abstract*

'Terrorism' has been a major staple of news media for several decades and even more so since the 11th September, 2001 attacks on the United States. Research on the phenomenon has grown at an unprecedented rate in recent years. However, most social scientific approaches tend to regard 'terrorism' as having thing-like properties.

In this paper I seek to show that 'terrorism' should be approached in a relational and processual way and be considered as part of 'established-outsider' relations. In order to do this, I examine how the concept after it was first coined during the first French Revolution was closely related to the concept of 'civilisation'. Using the examples of Britain and France, I go on to argue that the concept of 'terrorism' developed in antithesis to the concept of 'civilisation' and was heavily influenced by intra- and inter-state processes between the two countries. Later, I explain how Britain's relationship with Ireland was also central to the 'sociogenesis' of the concept of 'terrorism'.

I also show how the relationship between the concepts of 'terrorism' and 'civilisation' is perhaps one of the few regularities involving 'terrorism' since its birth in the late eighteenth century and add that the fact that 'terrorism' is used as a label to delegitimise outsider groups by established groups forms part of the same 'double-bind' processes and relations in which those designated as 'terrorists' act according to those designations.

KEYWORDS terrorism, civilisation, established-outsiders, sociogenesis, double-binds

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## Terrorism and civilisation: the case for a relational approach

In this paper I examine how the concept of ‘terrorism’ first emerged and developed from the period of the first French Revolution and how it was closely related to the development of the concept of ‘civilisation’. By doing this I show how ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ should be understood in relational and processual terms rather than in a normative sense that regards the phenomena as static and having thing-like properties. At the same time I make it clear that the ‘power or established-outsider’ relations within which ‘terrorism’ relations exist are fundamental to understanding the issue.

The paper is based on work I undertook for my PhD thesis, *Britain and terrorism: a socio-genetic investigation* (2014) and details the early stages, during the French Revolution, of how competitive inter- and intra-state struggles between the British establishment and its French Revolutionary rival during the nineteenth century played a central part in the development of the concept of ‘terrorism’. I explain how these inter- and intra-state struggles should be understood as specific manifestations of more general established-outsider processes and relationships which were fundamental to the development of ‘terrorism’ figurations during the nineteenth century. I then go on to show how the concept of ‘terrorism’ developed further as part of the relationships between established groups in Britain, France and outsider groups in Ireland during the nineteenth century.

Accordingly, the problem of ‘terrorism’ has been a major staple of the news media and government rhetoric and policies for many decades. It is also the subject of a huge mass of academic research, which has been highlighted by the psychologist John HORGAN (2005. xii.), who has pointed out that in the 12 months that followed the attacks on America on 11th September 2001 over 800 academic texts on ‘terrorism’ were produced in English alone, which itself is part of a huge growth in academic literature on ‘terrorism’ since the early 1970s. At the same time the subject has become one of the most regularly reported items in news media. This growth of research on ‘terrorism’ following the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 attacks shows that what are called ‘terrorist’ events often dictate the development of ‘terrorism’ research. Those attacks and the subsequent ‘war on terror’ were central to the large increase in the amount of academic work on the subject from the turn of the millennium. At the same time, how research on ‘terrorism’ is framed has contributed heavily to government and media responses to the problem, including the ‘war on terror’.

The majority of academic research on ‘terrorism’ views the phenomenon from a normative standpoint, which means very little of it approaches the problem developmentally and relationally. Rather than ‘terrorism’ being thing-like, as most research and news reporting presumes, a developmental and relational approach locates ‘terrorism’ as part of certain established-outsider relations. That is, ‘terrorism’ can be regarded as a stigmatising and delegitimising term used by one group against another. It happens that ‘terrorism’ is usually used in contexts where violence or the threat of violence is present. Additionally, ‘terrorists’ then become the people who act according to the designation of ‘terrorism’ in the context of these established-outsider relations. At the same time these processes and relationships are not static – they change over time, as do the groups that are designated as ‘terrorists’ and the reasons why they are designated as ‘terrorists’. We can ask, in figurational terms, therefore, what is the ‘sociogenesis’ of the concept of ‘terrorism’?

The fact that ‘terrorism’ should be regarded developmentally gives rise to the question of how ‘terrorism’ was designated at earlier stages of human development, and it is widely believed

that the word ‘terrorism’ was first coined during the first French Revolution of 1789. But before examining the early sociogenesis of ‘terrorism’ during this period, it helps with our understanding of the phenomenon to consider something related to this – the etymological roots of the words ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’. This shows in a very clear way how language has changed to help people orientate themselves as the nexus of human relations changes in ways that are new and unfamiliar.

## The etymology of the words ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’

Understanding the etymology of the words ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ can prove useful in gaining knowledge of the sociogenesis of ‘terrorism’ in a number of ways. This is because, as already stated, the development of words and concepts can help to highlight social changes. The emergence of new words and concepts shows that there is or was a social need for those new terms. The same is the case for the concepts of ‘terrorism’ and ‘civilisation’. Their emergence highlights that it was necessary to develop concepts that could be applied to new and emerging social configurations.

Accordingly, the word ‘terrorism’ and its derivatives (‘terrorist’ and ‘terrorists’) first appeared in France and England around the time of the Jacobin ascendancy, Maximilien Robespierre’s rule and the *regime de la terreur* (reign of terror) during the first French Revolution. It is derived from the much older word *terror*, which has its roots in Latin. *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology* (1995) lists the words as follows:

*Terror* (v) About 1375 *terroure* great fear, borrowed from Old French *terreur*, learned borrowing from Latin *terror* great fear, dread, from *terrere* fill with fear, frighten, terrify; for suffix see – OR. Latin *terrere* is cognate with Old Irish *tarrach* timid, Greek *trein* to tremble, flee, Lithuanian *trisa* tremble, Latvian *triset* to tremble, and Sanscrit *trasati* (he) trembles from Indo-European *ters-/tres-* from original *teres* (Pok.1095).

*Terrorism* (n) 1795, government by intimidation in the Reign of Terror (1793-94) during the French Revolution; borrowing from the French *terrorisme* (Latin *terror* terror + French *isme* sism). The general sense of systematic use of terror as a policy is first recorded in English in 1798.

*Terrorist* (n) 1795, person connected with the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, in the Annual Register; borrowing of French *terroriste*. (Latin *terror* + French *-iste* sist). The sense of one who furthers his cause by the use of terror is first recorded in English in 1866, in connection with the activities of extreme radical or revolutionary groups in Russia.<sup>1</sup>

That the word ‘terror’ had the suffixes ‘ism’ and ‘ist’ added to it is a significant change in language, which in turn represents an important change in how people were seeing the world. This change is highlighted by *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology* (1995). Placing the

<sup>1</sup> It must be noted briefly that the research on which this paper is based suggests that the last point in *The Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology* (1995) – that the sense of one who furthers his cause by the use of terror being first recorded in English in 1866 – is not fully correct. There are many instances in newspapers and other sources that record this kind of meaning as appearing much earlier.

suffixes 'ism' and 'ist' on the end of the verb terror creates two new nouns and this is important because it relates to a more general development in language, which is to categorise and describe what people were experiencing as societies that were becoming increasingly more complex and enabled people to better orientate themselves in these new social formations. Part of this involved an increase in the use of these suffixes in the 1500s which represents, in a small way, part of a transformation that European societies were undergoing in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That is, the greater use of suffixes, which are specifically used to create words that categorise, shows that there was, at the time of the increase in their use a greater social need for categorisation, as more emphasis was being placed upon detached forms of thinking in conjunction with increasingly longer and more complex chains of interdependency, and a broadening of the social division of functions in England, France, the rest of Europe and globally. In other words, the increased use of suffixes like 'ism' and 'ist' form part of a wider process of 'scientification'. The words 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' are, therefore, parts of a process intended to generate better understanding of human affairs and therefore, to categorise particular forms of social behaviour. However, they were not developed within a vacuum of rational thought but within the cauldron of inter- and intra-state rivalries and conflict, which meant that their categorising function was soon to be as a form of stigmatisation and delegitimation. In this way, certain 'outsider' enemies were categorised in a way that aimed to demean and dehumanise them.

The idea that the concepts of 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' had and still have social functions is of great relevance, even though this fact is more often than not missing from almost all of the research on 'terrorism'. Related to this but on a more general level ELIAS (2009. 65–66.) examined the significance of the development of the suffixes 'ism' and 'ist', and their use as parts of words intended to convey new social ideals. He pointed out the idea that people today have social ideals is so obvious that no one asks what social conditions were required to make it possible and meaningful for people to have social ideals. He added that because people are so heavily involved in various ways for their social ideals against others, they become blind to the social functions that such ideals have. He said:

*'One can see the problem better if one looks back to the age of the early sociologists. In their time, social ideals such as liberalism, conservatism, radicalism, socialism, communism and others appeared as something new. It was the [19th century] first century of the great 'isms'. The social beliefs which played so large a part in the approaches to society of the early sociologists were not necessarily identical with the nascent mass beliefs of their age, but although often more sophisticated, they were functionally related to them. One of the main levers for the study of society undertaken by the early sociologists was their desire to contribute, with the help of their studies, to the clarification of the aims, the programmes of action, the banners behind which social groups in society at large marched and rallied in their concerns with each other. One of the main motives in studying the past development of society was that of proving scientifically with the help of factual evidence that one's aims for the future were right.'* (ELIAS 2009. 65–66.)

As Elias mentioned, there were different social groups in the nineteenth century that had different ideals, which were often represented by words ending in 'ism' and 'ist'. These social groups developed concepts and words to represent in some ways the antitheses of their social ideals, and among those terms would have been words such as 'barbarism' and 'terrorism'. These two examples would have performed specific functions in helping to define the social positions of the groups deploying them, as well as the social positions of their enemies and rivals, as they

saw them. As already mentioned, the concept of 'terrorism' developed as part of a social need to categorise specific kinds of enemies by established groups. Those enemies have often tended to be groups who were opposed to established groups, such as working class organisations, groups from colonised countries, rival nation-states and so on. We can see these processes in motion in the period soon after the concept of 'terrorism' was first coined.

## The earliest use of the concepts of 'terrorism' and 'terrorist'

As far as is understood, the concepts of 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' first emerged during and immediately after the 1789 French Revolution and were used by and in relation to Maximilien Robespierre and his Jacobins as they implemented what they called the *régime de la terreur* (reign of terror) in 1793-94. Walter Laqueur (2001: 6) has pointed out that a French dictionary published in 1796 suggested that the Jacobins first used the terms in a 'positive' sense to describe themselves during the reign of terror. However, after the 'Thermidorian' reaction and the fall of Robespierre in July 1794, the terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' began to be used in a negative way. Laqueur wrote:

*'...[T]he meaning of terrorism was given in the 1798 supplement of the Dictionnaire of the Académie Française as système, régime de la terreur. According to a French dictionary published in 1796, the Jacobins had on occasion used the term when speaking and writing about themselves in a positive sense; after the 9<sup>th</sup> of Thermidor, terrorist became a term of abuse with criminal implications.'* (LAQUEUR 2001.6.)

That change in meaning is significant and the delegitimising 'criminal' implications that the term 'terrorism' developed have been central to its function ever since.

There are other important but related issues concerning the sociogenesis of the concept of 'terrorism' not least its relationship to the concept of 'civilisation' which manifested through the concept of 'virtue'. Accordingly, during his brief rule, Robespierre claimed that 'Terror' was a legitimate and virtuous aid to ruling. The aim of the *régime de la terreur* was to intimidate, and in many cases put to death those thought to oppose the Revolution, and to help consolidate the power of the revolutionaries. Robespierre in 1794 suggested: '...[V]irtue, without which terror<sup>2</sup> is evil; terror, without which virtue is helpless... Terror is nothing but justice, prompt, severe and inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue.' (1794, cited in HOFFMAN 2006. 3.).

Political scientists, Gérard CHALIAND and Arnaud BLIN (2007. 101.), point out that the apparatus which helped enable the *régime de la terreur* was set up early on in the Revolution, in 1789. The *Comité des recherches*, they say, was created to uncover counter-revolutionary conspiracies. It was the precursor to the *Comité de sûreté générale*, which was instigated to administer the *régime de la terreur*. They point out the following:

*'The Terror was...part and parcel of the Revolution: 'Launched to exterminate the aristocracy, the Terror had become a tool for crushing villains and fighting crime,' Gueniffey observes. 'It had become an integral component of the Revolution, inseparable from it, because only*

<sup>2</sup> Of course the word used here by Robespierre is "terror". The terms terrorism and terrorist were, however, also used at the same time by the French and the English to describe the *régime de la terreur* and its protagonists.

*terror could ultimately bring about a republic of citizens...If the Republic of free citizens was not yet possible, it was men, warped by their history, remained evil; through Terror, the Revolution—history as yet unwritten and brand-new—would make a new kind of man.* (CHALIAND – BLIN 2007. 102.)

What Chaliand and Blin are describing is what today is often designated as ‘state terrorism’. As such, it is unsurprising to discover that many ‘terrorism’ theorists refer to the reign of terror as an example of this kind of state violence.

## The early relationship between ‘terrorism’ and ‘civilisation’

However, it is through Robespierre and the idea of virtue, together with the French reform movement that we can see a very early relationship between ‘terrorism’ and ‘civilisation’. Correspondingly, Robespierre’s claim that terror emanates from virtue helps to show that there is a direct connection between the concepts of ‘civilisation’ and ‘terrorism’ through their relationship to the idea of virtue and the French reform movement. Crucially, as ELIAS (2000) pointed out, shortly after the Revolution the concept of ‘civilisation’ moved to the foreground as a ‘rallying cry’ for French aspirations and colonisation. But the concept was not one of the slogans of the Revolution, unlike Robespierre’s famous line about the virtues of terror. However, the concept of ‘civilisation’ was still closely linked to the Revolution. The term was first coined in the second half of the eighteenth century prior to the Revolution by the French Physiocrat, Victor Mirabeau (otherwise known as the elder Mirabeau and whose son – Honoré Mirabeau – was a revolutionary) as part of the moderate opposition movement against the *ancien regime*. It was, as ELIAS (2000. 38.) has explained, part of a more general social criticism of governments’ irrationalities in the face of social dynamics, at a time when the Physiocrats began to regard societies as having their own internal dynamics and that kings, governments and rulers were unable to regulate all human affairs, and as such, they argued, a more ‘rational’ form of governing was required.

The development of the word ‘civilisation’, according to ELIAS (2000. 39.), involved a ‘transformation of the earlier civilisé into a noun, helping to give a meaning that transcended individual usage.’ He suggested (2000. 39.) that Mirabeau contended that ‘genuine civilisation’ stood between ‘barbarism’ and a ‘false, decadent civilisation’ and that it was the role of a more ‘rational’ government to steer a course between the two. He went on to say that the concept of ‘civilisation’ increased in usage as the reform movement in France gained pace. It was the case, however, that reformist middle-class thinkers in France who were using the term ‘civilisation’ understood it as something not complete and that needed to be taken further. They thought that the masses needed to be ‘civilised’.

A key part of the Physiocrats’ concept of ‘civilisation’ was the ideal of virtue, which, as ELIAS (2000. 433.) pointed out, the emerging bourgeoisie counter-posed to the courtly frivolity of the courtly-aristocratic upper class. Relatedly, as we have seen, Robespierre claimed that virtue was helpless without ‘terror’, and, in fact, that terror emanated from virtue. Therefore, for him, ‘terrorism’ was a way of implementing and defending many of the values that had come under the umbrella of ‘civilisation’. Discussing the sociogenesis of ‘civilisation’, Elias quotes Mirabeau on how he linked the concept of ‘civilisation’ to virtue:

*'If they were asked what civilization is, most people would answer: softening of manners, urbanity, politeness, and a dissemination of knowledge such that propriety is established in place of laws of detail: all that only presents me with the mask of virtue and not its face, and civilization does nothing for society if it does not give it both the form and the substance of virtue.'* (Mirabeau, 1760s cited in ELIAS 2000. 34.).

We can see, therefore, that the concepts of 'civilisation' and 'terrorism' were born of the same movements – the related French reform and revolutionary movements of the latter half of the eighteenth century. The two concepts, at their birth, were inextricably linked. However, whereas 'civilisation' referred to a gradual process, 'terrorism' or the *régime de la terreur* was much more closely related to the most violent and radical aspects of the Revolution and in fact was used as a system to help force reform during some of the bloodiest years of the Revolution. In this sense, the two concepts are quite dissimilar: 'civilisation' meaning a gradual reform and 'terrorism' being a system with which to implement revolutionary reform, albeit in order to 'civilise' the population. Nevertheless, the use of violence and/or 'terrorism' to defend or expand 'civilisation' has been a common theme over the past 200 years. However, the defence or expansion of 'civilisation' through violent means must be understood in the context of established-outsider relations, and that the functional use of the concept of 'terrorism' only tends to be deployed successfully against a group or groups that rebel against 'civilisation'.

Accordingly, ELIAS (2000. 42.) has shown that, as the Revolution became more moderate, in the years immediately after the *régime de la terreur*, 'civilisation' came to be used as a 'rallying cry throughout the world'. He (2000. 43.) pointed out that in 1798 when Napoleon began his campaign of Egypt he was said to have shouted the following to his troops: 'Soldiers, you are undertaking a conquest with incalculable consequences for civilization.' This, said Elias, showed that nation-states, like France, now understood the process of 'civilisation' to be complete in their own societies and that this process needed to be exported to others; that they had a mission to 'civilise' the rest of the world.

Napoleon's Egypt mission can be regarded as one of the earliest examples, other than those already undertaken in France itself during the Revolution, of what have been referred to as 'civilising offensives' (see VAN KRIEKEN 1999, 2011) whereby established groups seek, often through violent means, to impose what they regard as 'civilisation' on groups they see as inferior and 'barbaric'. It may be useful to consider the idea that Robespierre's *régime de la terreur*, his 'terrorism', might be counted as a 'civilising offensive'. In this sense, Robespierre was seeking to 'civilise' the French people through 'terrorism'. In addition, the backlash against later European 'civilising missions' by rebellious peoples who had been colonised has often been referred to as 'terrorism'. This helps to highlight how the concepts of 'civilisation' and 'terrorism' have remained bound together since their inception – taken from the perspective of established groups in Western Europe, rebellious, colonised peoples have committed 'terrorism' against 'civilisation'.

## Britain, terrorism and civilisation

The roots of the concept of 'terrorism' are clearly in France, as are the roots of the concept of 'civilisation'. However, the sociogenesis of both concepts can be observed in Britain. Accord-



ingly, the development of the concept of ‘civilisation’ was not limited to France. It also developed among established groups in other Western European countries from the end of the eighteenth century, including Britain. It did not, however, develop in other countries in isolation from each other. Ruling groups across Europe shared much in common and therefore, there was a great deal of cross-fertilisation of ideas, language (primarily French) manners, and customs among them. But the forms of ‘civilisation’ varied according to the structural peculiarities of each country. Jonathan FLETCHER (1997. 9.), points out that the concept of ‘civilisation’ developed in England in much the same way that it did in France and that ‘civilisation’ in England referred to political, economic, technical and other social facts that originally expressed the social situation of the ruling elite of the aristocracy and parts of the bourgeoisie. ELIAS (2000: 428) pointed out how the process of ‘civilisation’ developed in England, saying that the ‘English code’ has features from the aristocracy fused with features from the middle-class, which include upper-class codes of good manners and middle-class codes of morals that were assimilated over a long and continuous period:

*‘Hence, when, in the course of the nineteenth century, most of the aristocratic privileges were abolished, and England with the rise of the industrial working classes became a nation-state, the English national code of conduct and affect-control showed very clearly the gradualness of the resolution of conflicts between upper and middle classes in the form, to put it briefly, of a peculiar blend between a code of good manners and a code of morals.’ (ELIAS 2000. 428.).*

It is at least partially the case that the resolution of conflicts between the upper and middle classes in Britain over a gradual timeframe helped to immunise Britain from potential revolution in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the context of the French Revolution and the debates in Britain over its merits need to be understood, for the purposes here, in relation to the great historic rivalry between France and Britain. The enmity between the two countries and the pre-nation-state territories that were to become Britain and France, stretches back many hundreds of years. These rivalries, which included the so-called ‘Hundred Years War’ and the ‘Second Hundred Years War’, played a major part in the development of the two distinct nation-states and, by the time the boundaries of France and Britain had become more or less fixed in their current geographies, and by the time of the French Revolution, the two were great rivals not only on the European stage but on the world stage. Therefore, the way in which the British ruling elites viewed the Revolution must be understood in this context of long-term rivalries and conflict. In fact, in the years just prior to the Revolution, there was a growing sense in France of imminent war with Britain.

War between Britain and France broke out while the French Revolution was at its height, shortly after the execution of Louis XVI and just before Robespierre’s *régime de la terreur*, in 1793 and lasted until 1802. The war was a direct result of the Revolution, which France had to defend at home and, as discussed, was attempting to export abroad.

As mentioned, in Britain there was a great deal of support for the French Revolution and its principles to begin with. The prominent Whig, Charles James Fox, is perhaps one of the best known politicians who supported the Revolution. Eric HOBBSBAWM (2011. 103.) has pointed out that there was a great deal of support for the Revolution in Britain from educated elites, including poets such as ‘Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, Robert Burns and Southey’; scientists including the chemist ‘Joseph Priestly and several members of the distinguished Birmingham



Lunar Society'; 'technologists and industrialists like Wilkinson, the ironmaster, and Thomas Telford, the engineer'. Other notable supporters included Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Despite this support, the most powerful established political and military groups in European countries saw the French Revolutionaries as enemies. The official government stance in Britain, including that of King George III, was opposed to what was happening across the Channel. This is borne out by the wars during that period between France and Britain and other European powers. During this nine-year period of war, Britain had been allied against the French at various times with Austria, Holland, most of Italy, Prussia, Russia and Spain. As such, the attitudes of the British establishment towards France and the Revolution have to be taken in the context of these wars. As has been shown, these attitudes differed from outright support of the Revolution to total opposition. The official British government line was the latter and this is best exemplified by the famous Whig politician Edmund Burke, who's views on the French Revolutionaries typified the views of a large part of the British ruling elite in this regard. Relatedly and importantly for the purposes here, Burke can also be credited as one of the earliest examples of a member of the British establishment using the word 'terrorist(s)'.

Burke was no supporter of the old aristocratic order but at the same time regarded the French revolutionaries as tyrannical, and even went as far as describing revolutionary France as a 'barbarian power' that could no longer be accepted among Europe's 'civilised states'. For Burke, the revolutionaries were totally 'uncivilised', whereas, for him 'civilisation' did exist in the old order. Burke made clear his criticism of the Revolution in 1790 in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (2009). Later, in 1795, when discussing the revolutionaries in a letter to the Earl Fitzwilliam, Burke refers to events in 1793 and the way in which the Jacobins helped to consolidate their rule in France, and said:

*To secure them further, they have a strong corps of irregulars, ready armed. Thousands of those Hell-hounds called Terrorists, whom they had shut up in Prison on their last Revolution, as the Satellites of Tyranny, are let loose on the people. The whole of their Government, in its origination, in its continuance, in all its actions, and in all its resources, is force; and nothing but force. A forced constitution, a forced election, a forced subsistence, a forced requisition of soldiers, a forced loan of money. (BURKE 1999. 358–359).*

Burke was speaking in 1795 during which time war between Britain and France was at its height. His comments, however, were in the context of a potential peace-making with France, which he called 'a Regicide peace' after the fact that the revolutionaries had executed Louis XVI. When speaking of France in this context, Burke was clearly speaking of an enemy. His opposition to the Revolution more generally and especially the tactics used by the Jacobins during the *régime de la terreur* compounds this. It would seem to contemporary eyes that his use of the term 'terrorists' adds to the other stigmatising words he used to describe the revolutionaries, such as 'hell-hounds', and elsewhere as 'robbers' and 'murderers'. However, closer inspection reveals that his use of the term 'terrorists' was emulating the Jacobins use of the term to describe a certain section of their enforcers of the Revolution. In fact, as LAQUEUR (2001. 6.) pointed out, it seems at that time that the word 'terrorists' did not have quite the pejorative notions that it was later to take on. But the concept of 'terrorists' at this stage, and in Burke's hands was clearly used as the name of a group onto which a huge amount of stigmatising and delegitimising language was thrown. It was also used, when referring specifically to the Jacobins, against a group that by 1795 had

increasingly reduced power chances compared to more established groups in Britain and France.

Accordingly, there were a great many instances in which Burke used stigmatising, delegitimising and dehumanising language to describe the revolutionaries. For example, in the above quote, he calls them ‘Hell-hounds’. Elsewhere he called them ‘regicides’, ‘robbers’, ‘murderers’, ‘ruffians’, ‘thieves’, ‘assassins’ and described their actions as ‘crimes’ and ‘savage’. In addition, Burke stated the following opinion of the Revolutionary Committee in Paris:

*‘The Costume of the Sansculotte Constitution of 1793 was absolutely insufferable. The Committee for Foreign Affairs were such slovens, and stunk so abominably, that no Muscadin Ambassador of the smallest degree of delicacy of nerves could come within ten yards of them...’* (BURKE 1999. 339.).

Burke’s claims that his French revolutionary enemies smelled badly, is an example of a commonly used attempt at stigmatising outsiders by established groups. For example, in the eighteenth century during efforts to differentiate themselves from bourgeois groups, aristocrats would often refer to something they disapproved of as having the stench of the bourgeoisie. The claim that outsider groups are unclean is discussed by Elias. He (1994. xxvii) pointed out that when the power margins between established and outsider groups are great enough, established groups tend to experience outsiders as ‘unruly breakers of norms’ and as unclean. In addition, he added that there is a widespread feeling among established groups in this context, that contact with outsiders will contaminate them with both dirt and anomie ‘rolled into one’.

This can be seen in the relationship between Burke, the social group he represented and the French revolutionaries, which was complex and multi-layered, but nevertheless, represented a clear example of the deployment of stigmatising language in the context of established-outsider relations. Burke’s enemies, the Sansculottes (literally translated as without knee breeches), were an urban movement mostly from the labouring poor, and included small-scale entrepreneurs, craftsmen, artisans and shopkeepers (HOBBSAWM 2011. 84.). They organised themselves through the ‘sections’ of Paris and political clubs. They were, says HOBBSAWM (2011. 84.), ‘the main striking force of the Revolution – the actual demonstrators, rioters, constructors of barricades’.

The Sansculottes, in terms of social stratification, existed between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat but were generally poor (HOBBSAWM 2011. 84.). They represented an outsider group in relation to Burke who was a member of the established political elite in Britain. In this sense, there would have been a significantly large power differential between groups that Burke belonged to and the Sansculottes. But established-outsider relations, in this case, extend even further, in that Burke was a member of the English Parliament, and the Sansculottes were French, meaning that, for Burke the Sansculottes were outsiders in two ways – because they were of a lower social standing and because they were foreigners, i.e. French.

This only partially helps to explain the established-outsider relations that existed between members of the British political elite like Burke and the Sansculottes. As has already been made clear, France and Britain were great rivals and, as such, there were complex established-outsider relations involved between the two countries, and on the part of which stigmatising language was often deployed. In this case, however, the power differentials were relatively small. Given this, the increased power potential of the Sansculottes during the Revolution, although not huge, was enough to even up the balance a little between them and the British political elites of which Burke was a member.

Therefore, Burke’s claim that the Sansculottes ‘stank’ can be seen as an attempt to stigma-

tise an outsider group that was gaining relatively greater power-potential in relation to Burke's established British political elite, which shared a great deal more in common with members of the French nobility and higher echelons of the French bourgeoisie, such as the *Noblesse de Robe* and the *Noblesse d'épée*. In this sense 'functional democratisation' was occurring across nation-states, as well as within them and as a result putting pressure on established groups to respond to perceived and real threats to their status. In *On the Process of Civilization* (2012), Elias discusses how the upper classes used similar stigmatising tactics when they were under pressure from below by the bourgeoisie. With respect to the upper classes Elias pointed out that: 'Anything that touches their embarrassment-threshold smells bourgeois, is socially inferior; and inversely, anything bourgeois touches their embarrassment-threshold.' (ELIAS 2000. 422.)

Burke's attempts at stigmatising the revolutionaries did not stop at claiming that they smelt. He also regarded them as criminals. In 1793, he wrote that the revolutionaries were the 'most dreadful gang of robbers and murderers that were ever embodied' (1999. 55.). In other words, Burke stigmatised the French Revolutionary 'terrorists' as having a terrible smell and as being barbaric criminals. 'Terrorism', therefore, very early on, become associated with what are considered to be some of the worst and most animalic aspects of people.

It is clear that Burke found the revolutionaries to be 'uncivilised' and the language he used against them was a clear attempt to devalue their human worth and legitimacy. This is significant for a number of reasons, not least because, although 'civilisation' was not one of the watchwords of the Revolution, its close relationship to the concept of virtue which was, shows that, on the one hand, the French revolutionaries saw their revolution as an extension of virtue (and therefore 'civilisation') but on the other hand, powerful members of the British establishment regarded their actions as the opposite of 'civilised' behaviour. In other words, who is 'civilised' depends on which side one is on – the revolutionaries regarded themselves as 'civilised', yet a large proportion of the British establishment, including Burke saw them as barbaric. Equally, who is a 'terrorist' also depends on which side one is on. The saying: 'one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter' is pertinent in this respect.

In discussing the dangers of being conquered by France, Burke claimed that it was 'civilised' countries that would be conquered. He stated:

*'This is the only power in Europe by which it is possible we should be conquered. To live under the continual dread of such immeasurable evils is itself a grievous calamity. To live without the dread of them is to turn the danger into disaster. The influence of such a France is equal to a war; its example, more wasting than an hostile irruption. The hostility with any other power is separable and accidental; this power, by the very condition of its existence, by its very essential constitution, is in a state of hostility with us, and with all civilized people.'* (BURKE 1999. 122.).

Burke's claim that revolutionary France was at war with 'civilised' people shows how the concept of 'civilisation' is relative to established-outsider relations – on the one hand revolutionary France is seeking to spread 'virtue' and 'civilisation' among its people and later seeks to export those ideals abroad; on the other hand this is seen by France's enemies as an attack on 'civilisation'. In many respects, these 'inter-state figurations' can be regarded as a 'clash of civilisations' between the British establishment version of 'civilisation' and the revolutionary French version.

We can see how the 'terrorism'-civilisation' dichotomy has persisted since Burke, whose claims were echoed more than 200 years later, albeit in a slightly different context. In a speech

about ‘jihadist terrorism’ shortly after the attacks on London’s transport system in July 2005, the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said the following:

*‘What we are confronting here is an evil ideology. It is not a clash of civilisations – all civilised people, Muslim or other, feel revulsion at it. But it is a global struggle and it is a battle of ideas, hearts and minds... This is the battle that must be won, a battle not just about the terrorist methods but their views. Not just their barbaric acts, but their barbaric ideas.’ (BBC News online, 2005).*

The similarities in Burke’s and Blair’s rhetoric in both cases show an attempt to delegitimise an outsider group, which exemplifies that the concept of ‘terrorism’ should be understood as a relational one, as part of established-outsider processes and as a means to stigmatise and delegitimise outsider groups. It has developed, in this context, and is still used today, in antithesis to the concept of ‘civilisation’.

The context in which Burke used the word ‘terrorists’ is as important as the fact that the concept began to take on negative connotations in France relatively soon after it was coined. That is, the concepts of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ developed negative connotations early on in both intra-state relations in France and inter-state relations between France and Britain. Later on, in nineteenth century Britain the concepts were used in stigmatising ways to describe, among others, rebellious Irish Catholics, trades unionists, reform groups such as the Chartists, anarchists and others that established groups saw as a threat.

The sociogenesis of the concept of ‘terrorism’ relative to the concept of ‘civilisation’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, during which time it became a term of abuse and delegitimation, can also be seen in texts, other than Burke’s, including British newspapers. This is an important development in the concept, as it shows that in certain circles it was becoming relatively well known. For example, both ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ are used in the context of the Napoleonic wars to describe the actions of Napoleon and the French, and very often refer to the implementation by Napoleon of ‘systems of terrorism’, which obviously relates closely to the *régime de la terreur* during Robespierre’s rule. For example, the Scottish Caledonian Mercury on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1809, reported a letter from Spain stating that a ‘system of terrorism’ is likely to be put in place in Madrid by Napoleon and the occupying French. This again highlights the idea of a clash of ‘civilisations’ as part of the British and French inter-state relations at the time. On the one hand Napoleon was fighting for France and for ‘civilisation’, but for established groups in Britain his implementation of ‘civilisation’ amounted to ‘terrorism’.

However, as already mentioned, the sociogenesis of the concept of ‘terrorism’ in relation to the concept of ‘civilisation’ also developed in relationships outside of the immediate contexts of the French Revolution. The concepts’ interdependent relationship expanded in the context of British-Irish relations. Accordingly, the sociogenesis of the concept of ‘terrorism’, involved a shift in its meaning from being solely related to the French Jacobins, other French revolutionaries and Napoleon, to a more general concept in Britain, which was applied to groups that rebelled against the British establishment.

## The structural context of nineteenth century British-Irish terrorism figurations

The concepts of 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' first appear in the context of Britain's relationship to Ireland around 40 years after the 1789 French Revolution. The use of the terms were used to describe rebellious Irish Catholics and this was a continuation of the process of its becoming a more general term that involved calling enemies with relatively fewer power chances, terrorists.

Inter- and intra-state processes on a variety of levels have been fundamental to the conflicts involving the British establishment and Irish Catholics and, as such, to the sociogenesis of terrorism in relation to these two groups. As such, inter-state competition between Britain and its rivals and consequently the monopolisation of physical force and taxation over increasingly larger areas by the rulers of Britain have been crucial to these processes. Again, the relations between the British establishment and its French counterparts are prominent with respect to Britain's relations with Ireland. The fact that centripetal monopolisation forces<sup>3</sup> were in the ascendancy in Europe from the eleventh century has to be considered for the purposes here in relation to the competition between the rulers of what was to become France and what was to become England and later Britain. At times, for example, single rulers ruled areas that encompassed parts of what is now France and what is now Britain simultaneously. Both of these countries had developed the characteristics of nation-states by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, meaning that the populations in the geographical areas called 'France' and 'Britain' came under the control of centralised, monopolistic governing structures in the guise of monarchs and parliaments, and that the apparatuses of physical force and taxation were under the control of these centralised authorities. However, this did not mean that competition was over; there were still inter-state pressures, particularly between these two powerful nation-states. That pressure, as we have seen already, culminated in wars between the two countries following the French Revolution and a rejection of the principles of the Revolution in Britain by a significant proportion of the establishment. Furthermore, the competition between the two countries also encouraged them both, at various times, to increase their monopolies of violence and taxation to other jurisdictions – a process which is often referred to as colonisation. Britain, for example,

<sup>3</sup> ELIAS (2000. 268.) points out that if one side of this monopoly process collapses then the other will follow. He also argued that societies tend to be balanced between centrifugal forces and centripetal forces. The former are decentralizing and dis-unifying, whereas the latter are monopolizing and centralizing. Until the 11th century in Europe centrifugal forces were in the ascendancy. However, from that period centripetal forces became dominant. According to Elias, monopoly processes of violence and taxation can be summarized as follows:

'If, in a major social unit, a large number of the smaller social units which, through their interdependence, constitute the larger one, are of roughly equal social power and are thus able to compete freely – unhampered by free existing monopolies – for the means to social power, i.e. primarily the means of subsistence and production, the probability is high that some will be victorious and others vanquished, and that gradually, as a result, fewer and fewer will control more and more opportunities, and more and more units will be eliminated from the competition, becoming directly or indirectly dependent on an ever-decreasing number. The human figuration caught up in this movement, will therefore, unless countervailing measures are taken, approach a state in which all opportunities are controlled by a single authority: a system with open opportunities will become a system of closed opportunities.' (ELIAS 2000. 269.)

So for Elias, central to these processes are competitive pressures between different social groups, although, he points out that in reality there are a number of additional complexities that can add to the processes, such as a number of smaller groups overcoming a single larger one, and so on.

expanded its monopoly of violence and taxation to Catholic Ireland in part, at least, to help protect itself from invasion from Catholic France. We can see here, therefore, that the competitive interdependent relationships between Britain and France played a significant role in the relationship between Britain and Ireland. Accordingly, all three countries formed part of the same inter-state figuration, in which some people were labelled as acting according to the then designation of 'terrorism'. That came about as Britain attempted to increase its monopolisation of physical force and taxation to include Ireland. However, it was never able to fully subdue the rebellious (predominantly Catholic) Irish in the same way that other groups had been brought under monopolistic control in the rest of Britain. The resultant designation as 'terrorists' of those who did rebel forms part of attempts to stigmatise and delegitimise those who rebelled, in some cases violently and in others non-violently. We can see here the connection between, on the one hand, inter-state processes between Britain and France and the development of 'terrorism' in antithesis to 'civilisation'. The British establishment, driven by inter-state pressures, tried to pacify Irish Catholics in the name of 'civilisation'.

## Conclusion

Understanding 'terrorism' and 'civilisation' in this relational sense is perhaps one of the few regularities that can be associated with 'terrorism' over the long-term. For example, we can see very similar established-outsider relations at play in more recent examples of 'terrorism' figurations to those discussed above. That is, in contemporary Britain (and elsewhere) there are groups who are called 'terrorists' that are said to be an affront to 'civilisation'. However, those same groups may not regard themselves as 'terrorists' but may even consider that they are defending their equivalent of 'civilisation' against 'barbarous' forces. Accordingly, when established groups refer to groups like the Islamic State as 'terrorists' and despite the horrific acts that this groups undertakes, the relationship between a self-styled 'civilised' established group and an outsider group that has been labelled as 'terrorists' should be taken into account. That the outsider group then acts according to the specific designation of 'terrorism' in that particular time and place is also a part of the same established-outsider power relations involved in these processes. Correspondingly, the labelling of a group as 'terrorist' as opposed to those who consider themselves 'civilised' is part of the same 'double-bind' process that involves the 'brutal' acts that are said to constitute 'terrorism'. It is the established-outsider relations that should be the focus of social scientific attention rather than trying to seek some kind of 'causal' reason for 'terrorism', as is often the case.



With this in mind, as we have seen, inter- and intra-state processes involving Britain and France and later Ireland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were fundamental to the development of the concepts of 'terrorism' and 'terrorist'. This shows that the phenomenon must be understood in relational terms rather than as a thing, as normative approaches to terrorism suggest it should be. Accordingly, a major difference between a sociological approach that examines long-term processes and much of the social scientific work that has gone before on 'terrorism' is that the latter tends to lack what ELIAS (2007. 152.) referred to as adequate levels of detachment and that many social scientists tend to project the standards



and values of their own time onto people of the past. This has led them to argue that so-called 'modern terrorism' began with European anarchists (see LIZARDO 2006; RAPOPORT 2004) because the tactics that European anarchists used bear some similarity to the tactics used by some present-day 'terrorists'.

ELIAS (2007. 154.) argued that a sociological approach requires a greater degree of detachment and higher level of synthesis. This means that research should be focused on longer-term developments, which tend to concentrate on timeframes beyond the scope of most work undertaken by those who research 'terrorism'.

Therefore, a historical or developmental sociological approach can produce knowledge that has a higher degree of 'reality congruence' and is also testable. Accordingly, an investigation of the 'sociogenesis' of the concept of 'terrorism' can reveal a great deal, including how normative uses of the concept have developed over time, and at the same time uncovers some of the wider structural processes (such as inter- and intra-state relations) at play that, at least in part, contribute to what is understood to be 'terrorism' in normative senses. Such an approach avoids 'essentialising' 'terrorism', as many mainstream terrorism theories (see SCHMID – JONGMAN 2006; PEARLSTEIN 1991; CRENSHAW 2000; LAQUEUR 2000; BJORGO 2005; WILKINSON 2006; HORGAN 2005; WEINBERG – PEDAHZUR – HIRSCH-HOEFLER 2004; JUERGENSEMEYER 2006; MERRARI 1999; GUPTA 2005 for example) tend to, and at the same time steers a course clear of more highly relativistic understandings of 'terrorism' that are often evident in social constructivist and post-structuralist approaches (see OLIVERIO 1998; JACKSON – SMYTH – GUNNING 2009; BAUDRILLARD 2001, for example). The point made in this paper is that 'terrorism' should be regarded as a relational concept that is very much related to the concept of 'civilisation' in the context of established-outsider relations. \*

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